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Sent: Mon 4/14/2014 3:16:14 PM
Subject: FW: PSNH Op-Ed from Sierra Club

FYI

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From: Beck, Erik
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2014 10:38 AM
To: DeMeo, Sharon M.; Gaito, Danielle; Houlihan, Damien; King, John Paul; Nelson, Eric; Stein, Mark
Subject: PSNH Op-Ed from Sierra Club

News Headline: Time to retire PSNH's dirty coal plants | 

Outlet Full Name: Concord Monitor - Online

News Text: A new report by the New Hampshire Public Utility Commission staff reaffirms that Public Service Company of New Hampshire's coal-fired power plants are uneconomical and uncompetitive in New Hampshire's electricity market. It's clear that New Hampshire families can't afford to continue supporting these dirty coal plants that pose a risk to our wallets and to our health.

Similar to a report issued last year, PUC expert staff found that PSNH's coal plants, the only two in New Hampshire, are not economical to operate and never will be.

They state that “over the long term” the rates PSNH charges for electricity “will be substantially higher than market prices,” a leading reason many customers have switched away from PSNH.

Specifically, the report shows that all of PSNH's power-generating assets are worth just \$225 million, a fraction of PSNH's asserted book costs of \$660 million. The \$435 million difference is roughly the same as the cost PSNH is seeking to recover for a poorly planned investment in upgrades at its Merrimack Station coal plant in Bow.

As a result, the report discusses the implications of PSNH divesting, or selling, these assets. However, the fact that these coal plants will never be competitive should signal that it's time to retire, not merely sell, the polluting facilities.

The harmful health effects of burning coal are undeniable.

Pollution from coal-burning plants, even those with new pollution controls, threatens our air, water, and climate. Communities living near PSNH's Schiller Station coal plant in Portsmouth are so concerned about the prevalence of asthma and respiratory disease in their community that they have petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to investigate pollution from the plant.

Studies have shown that Schiller, one of the oldest power plants in the nation, can emit enough harmful sulfur dioxide pollution to violate healthy air standards in both New Hampshire and Maine.

Such sulfur dioxide pollution means more severe asthma attacks, emergency room visits, and missed days of school and work for New Hampshire residents. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the harm to human health alone from the average coal-fired power plant costs us \$156 million a year.

Then there are the myriad additional costs on the horizon that will put PSNH's customers at even greater risk if the coal plants stay in operation. New federal limits on dangerous carbon pollution and health safety standards for coal pollution are just around the corner, and the EPA is expected to rule on Schiller's dangerous pollution in the next several months.

Yet, despite the findings of the PUC report, and the poor decision to spend nearly a half-billion dollars on Merrimack Station, PSNH wants to keep doing more of the same.

It is proposing to spend even more with a multi-million dollar investment at the aging Schiller Station on the Seacoast when it's clear that the plant is no longer a smart investment.

Across the country utilities are retiring similarly uneconomical coal plants, but PSNH has no incentive to make responsible choices if they believe their customers will continue to bail them out.

Contrary to PSNH's recent scare tactics, cold-weather events like the polar vortex don't change this bleak picture. The PUC report correctly states that issues around winter-time gas constraints will be resolved and any remaining financial value derived from coal capacity during these cold spells will diminish over time.

New Hampshire is facing major decisions about our energy future.

We can stay stuck in the past with more expensive and polluting fossil fuels like coal and gas, or choose to invest in a clean, safe, and healthy energy future with renewable resources like wind, solar, and energy efficiency that will create jobs and grow our economy.

PSNH's coal-fired power plants are endangering our air, water, health, and climate. New Hampshire families don't deserve more dirty air, sick kids or bad decisions by PSNH. It's time to retire PSNH's dirty coal plants and start building a healthier energy future for New Hampshire.

(Jerry Curran is the New Hampshire Sierra Club chapter chairman in Amherst.)